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Missiles

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

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* This reply was received after the submission of the main report.

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II. Replies received from Member States

Italy*

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[29 September 2003]

1. The European Union (EU) member States abstained in the vote on General Assembly resolution 57/71. The rationale for such a decision is not linked to the content of the resolution itself — much of which we agree with — but rather to what has not been included in the resolution. In effect, the resolution does not give due attention to the proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially those capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction. As a matter of fact, we believe that the proliferation of ballistic missiles is an urgent problem which deserves the highest attention.

2. The EU stresses that programmes of acquisition and development of ballistic missiles have adverse consequences on global peace and security. The EU notes with concern that the international community as a whole is challenged by the growing risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction's means of delivery, such as ballistic missiles.

3. The EU cannot and does not ignore these threats: meeting this challenge is a priority in EU external action. The EU reaffirms its commitment to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls, as well as to addressing the problems of regional instability and insecurity, and the situations of conflict which may lie behind many ballistic missiles programmes. At the same time, the EU stresses that, in addition, a global, multilateral approach to the problem is necessary.

4. The EU considers that the establishment of globally accepted rules and practices to support ballistic missiles non-proliferation is essential and urgent. Therefore, since the Goteborg European Council in 2001, the EU has strongly supported and participated in the efforts aimed at developing and launching an international code of conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles, the Hague Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles (HCOC). Consequently, the EU attaches great importance to its universalization and is actively engaged to have it adopted by as many States as possible. As a matter of fact, since the launching conference of HCOC held in The Hague less than one year ago, the number of countries adhering to HCOC has considerably grown: today more than 100 countries adhere to it.

5. The EU recalls that HCOC establishes, on the one hand, fundamental principles that were previously lacking and introduces, on the other hand, a multilateral framework for cooperation in an area where previously there was none. While the EU recognizes that other initiatives have been proposed in the field, it stresses that HCOC is the most advanced one. The EU considers HCOC an initial but essential step to effectively address the problem from a multilateral, global perspective, without precluding other initiatives or, in the longer run, more comprehensive approaches.

6. The EU considers that in its first year of life, HCOC has already become an asset: at present, HCOC membership covers all continents, thus helping spread

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.

confidence and enhance international security. However, the EU regrets that there are still membership gaps in certain regions where ballistic missiles proliferation is still an urgent issue. Thus, the EU welcomes all newly adhering countries and strongly hopes more countries will adhere to HCOC in the near future so as to move forward towards its universalization as a politically binding instrument. In that respect, the EU believes that the relationship between HCOC and the United Nations should be strengthened.

7. Finally, the EU welcomes the establishment of an expert group, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/33, as a useful mechanism in the multilateral consideration of the issue of missiles. The EU, however, is not convinced that another panel of governmental experts, as proposed by the resolution, is an efficient next step. Any future panel would only be meaningful on the basis of an agreed specific mandate which ensured that added value could be offered.